

SOCIAL 

 TRAGEDIES

 SCHOLL 





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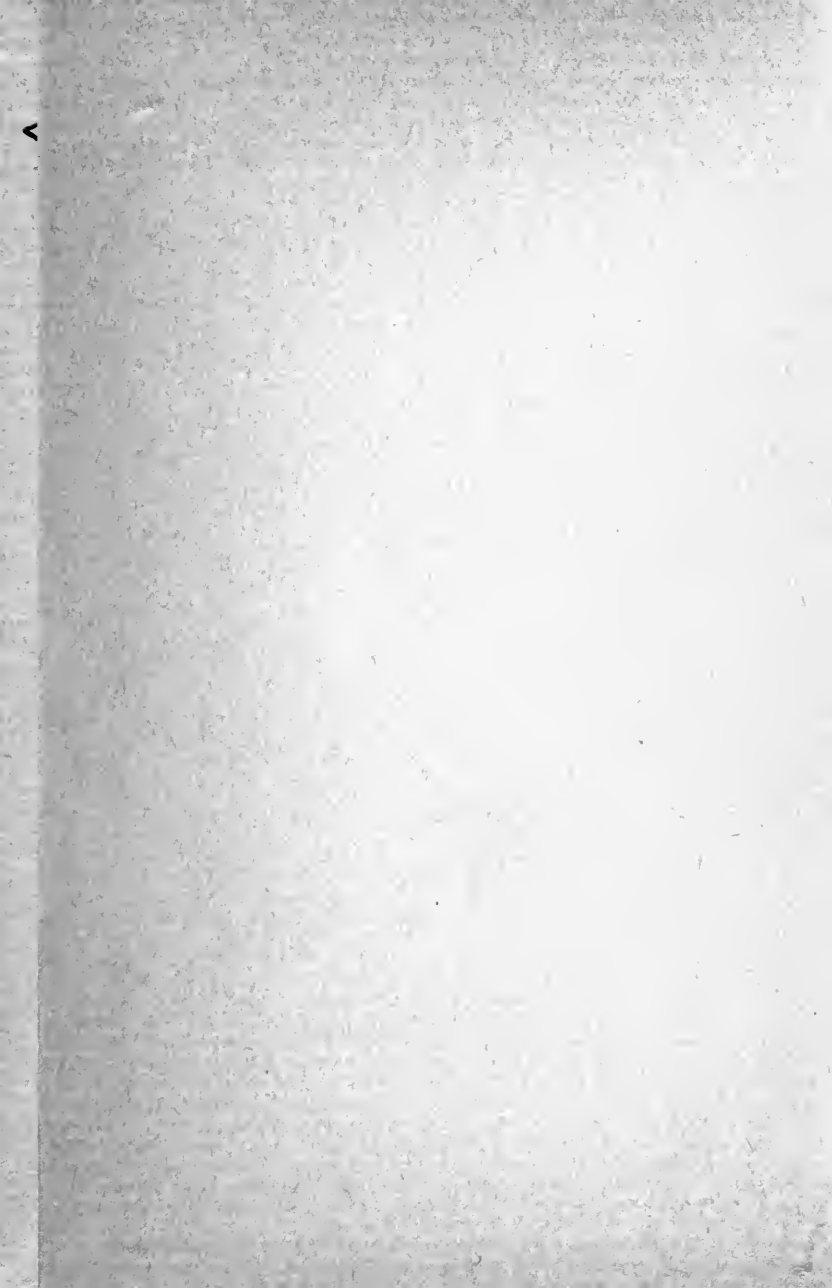
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# SOCIAL TRAGEDIES

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

J. W. SCHOLL

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY."



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## PREFACE.



EVERY life has multiform activities, and when the artistic sense is present, embodies itself in different ways.

A careless judge will be carried away by one single embodiment, and consider the whole, a monotonous enlargement of that single part. The larger-minded reader will see that there is unity which binds all the embodiments together, and that that unity is not an abstraction, but a concrete human life, which, in its constant interplay with environment, expresses itself, always partially, it is true, but always genuinely.

No writer ever gives a complete rendition of his soul. Not even when his work is done and all the broken lights of his life are gathered into one full beam. There is always an inexpressible residue of the personality which perishes from the world.

Emotional life as well as intellectual life has its tropics. There may be wide latitudes between the extreme positions of thought and feeling in a single life at different times. The greater the life, the wider the range. A narrow consistency is possible only in a barren life.

The contents of this little volume grew up side by side with the "Light-Bearer of Liberty" and covers the same period of activity. It claims attention only so far as it finds echoes in the hearts of fellow men, who are yearning for an ideal life, which shall make possible the embodiment of the ideal.

THE AUTHOR.



TO  
MY WIFE,  
THE SHARER AND INSPIRER  
OF  
MY LITERARY LABORS,  
THIS LITTLE VOLUME  
IS DEDICATED.



# SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.



## MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.



COME hither a little, Maud, while the shadows creep this way,  
Come sit by my side and talk, for the morrow's  
your wedding day,

And a younger hand than mine, Dear, will lead  
you from my side,  
And younger lips than mine, Dear, will claim  
you a willing bride,

And you'll leave your dear old home, and my  
old loving heart,—  
I've lived for you forty years, and loved you  
from the start!—

What! You're not so old! But it's true,  
though you, Maud, can't understand  
How your mother and I were young once, and  
thought and yearned and planned,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And loved you all together, before our marriage morn,  
Full twenty years and more before you, Maud,  
were born.

For you were the last, the pet and pride of  
mother and me,  
And we kept you the baby still, as long as that  
could be.

But you wouldn't stay little at all, in spite of  
our love and care,  
And your dresses were laid aside, Maud, too  
small for you to wear.

And I'd have been jealous of all the thieving  
years could do,  
But they left you your mother's eyes of tender-  
est sunniest blue.

There were other children, Maud, and we loved  
them dearly, too.  
But still, as each babe could talk, another be-  
gan to coo,

And life grew stronger and prouder, my Dar-  
ling, for mother and me,  
And we shared in their work and study, and  
toiled for them cheerily.

MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.

But I was vexed, sometimes, when the world  
wouldn't seem to go right,  
And I said some things, my child, I'd be glad  
to recall tonight,

For my thoughts go out to two little mounds in  
Sunnyside,  
Where the first of our darling children are  
sleeping side by side,

And I wonder, if they had lived, if they'd try  
to break my heart  
As the boy that was spared to me!—The fool-  
ish tears will start

When I talk of our only son, that married out  
of my life,  
And deserted mother and me, for a cold and  
heartless wife,

That spoiled in a year or two, with her prim  
society ways,  
The generous heart of my boy,—'twas the nur-  
ture of all our days,—

For mother was patient, Maud, and loved him  
and taught him, too,  
To be kindly and patient and loving, and al-  
ways loyal and true.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But she was a fortune-hunter, with a pair of  
warm brown eyes,  
And he was young and loved her,—I thought  
it scarcely wise !—

But it wasn't for mother and me to know what  
was the best,—  
And marrying other people is wisdom's grand-  
est test !—

So we wept a little together, and let them go  
their way,  
And Maud, my Darling, you know the rest.  
There came a day

When we quarreled—we couldn't help it—I'm  
sorry for all tonight !  
I tried to do my best, but the world wouldn't  
seem to go right.

And you're the last of all, Maud, for mother is  
sleeping, too,  
And I am all alone, Maud, in the shadows,  
alone with you.

You will stay with me, Darling, you say? No,  
that can never be,  
For you have a life to live, too, apart from  
mother and me.



MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.

She sleeps in the silent ferns, Maud, that you  
    planted on the hill,  
And I'll soon be lying beside her, if gracious  
    Heaven will,

And I'm not such a brute of a father, to spoil  
    my Maud's birthright  
For the few short years of evening, before I bid  
    her good night ;

For William's a fine-built fellow with a strong  
    and manly face,  
And he'll be good to you, Maud, and he comes  
    of a goodly race.

You love him, you say, and he's noble and  
    loyal and tender and true,  
And I love him, too, my child, almost as dear-  
    ly as you ;

So blessings on both forever, for tomorrow's  
    the wedding day,  
And it matters little how soon now the shad-  
    ows creep this way.

But when the first babe comes, Maud, remem-  
    ber us cheerily,  
And nestle it soft in the ferns, Dear, for the  
    sake of mother and me.

## THE INVALID.



THE days grow dark and lone, Alice, dark  
and dreary for me,  
And the years float on like sea-weed adrift on  
a stagnant sea.

But there must be currents below, for I know  
I am far away  
From the purple isles of light where my ill-  
starred infancy lay.

I try to be patient and bear the tedium of the  
hours,  
And take no thought of the morrow, though  
Night above me lowers ;

But I can not bear it forever, my soul is rebel-  
lious flame ;  
Why was an eagle's spirit chained down to this  
shattered frame ?

## THE INVALID.

Every muscle should have been strong as the  
    lion's lusty thews,  
Whose chase-worn strength the day for each  
    midnight chase renews !

The blood should have surged in my veins with  
    a full impetuous tide,  
That could nourish power and passion and fling  
    Life's portals wide

To storm and sun alike, and conquer and use  
    them both  
For the ripening of the brain and the spirit's  
    dauntless growth !

But a baby's hand is as strong as this withered  
    hand of mine,  
And health and hope are gone, and marred is  
    the fair design,

The Angel of Life had sketched with his pencil  
    of seven-hued light,  
When my soul burst forth like a star from  
    Being's primal night.

Three score? Is it blessed to live when all  
    that is worth the living  
Is ruined? So *long*, and remember a deed that  
    is past forgiving?

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

His blows? His curses? That look? The  
tyranny worse than all?  
The cloister prison that kept the heart and  
brain in thrall

To creeds effete and dead, and systems rotten  
and old?  
I'd rather be dead as they, and turned into dust  
and mould.

For I stood on the threshold of life, in the face  
of the universe,  
A mendicant begging with hands outstretched  
for an alms,—or worse,

A mind misformed and warped, a hand un-  
skilled in aught,  
The Gordian knot of the world drawn harder  
by all I wrought.

And *mine* the fault? If I lounge in the Inn of  
the World, and eat,  
And pay no reckonings back, is it counted  
wrong to cheat

The World of my feed and keep, that robbed  
my whole birthright,  
And left me naked and bare, unpitied in  
wretched plight?

THE INVALID.

Give me my strength, O World ! I'll struggle  
along with the rest,  
And pay the uttermost farthing, and count all  
things as best !

But the days are dark and lone, Alice, so lone  
and dreary for me,  
As the years float on like sea-weed adrift on a  
stagnant sea.

I have friends ? That are kind ? I am grate-  
ful to them, to all, to you,  
But the bliss is in the helping, and I am all  
helpless, too.

If only the struggle were done ! A man with  
the passions of man,  
I love—Let it pass !—I have loved,—as only  
the passionate can,

With the blindness of devotion, with soul and  
mind and heart,—  
My sister ? I love her as warm, but she has a  
life apart !

Her child ? She's the sunshine of life, and fair  
as a flower of May,  
But the years will make her a woman, and steal  
her heart away !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Hush, Alice! Sweet Alice, forbid—let it die,  
the unuttered word!

No random yearning of mine from its fixed re-  
solve has erred,

Never to let a woman turn sympathy into  
love

And mingle her fate with mine!—let the inno-  
cent snowy dove

Consort with the kite!—Yet I yearn with the  
strength of my passionate soul,

To stretch out my arms to something, ere I  
touch Time's latest goal,

And clasp it, and call it *mine*, all *mine*, and for-  
ever mine!

To love and cherish forever, *mine*, *mine*, warm-  
ly faithfully *mine*!

'Twas a dream!—'Tis a dream—that must die  
with the dreamer, unfulfilled,

In a heart full of dust and ashes, where the  
buds of joy were killed!

The fittest survive, I can see, but little comfort  
it gives

To the weakest in the fight, to be conscious of  
death while he lives.

## THE INVALID.

There a father with light in his face and the  
pride of his life on his knee,  
Looks Fate in the face serenely. His race  
continues to be.

His name will be heard for ages, in honor and  
blessing and praise,  
And his deeds will be cherished and told  
through all the coming days.

And a part of his soul will live, in an everlast-  
ing life,  
Victorious over death in the never-ending  
strife,

But my race must perish, at last, and none will  
weep for me,  
If I overlive the few who have loved me faith-  
fully.

Turn mad? And berate the world? And  
curse the living and dead?  
Because they gave me a stone, when I wanted  
only bread?

O not while the world has love and peace for  
the many, shall I  
Despair of the far event, though I may be  
doomed to die!

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And perchance I am part of a plan, a part of  
this old world's life  
Not utterly lost and forgotten, though con-  
quered in the strife,

And who can know, but someday, when this  
broken body is gone,  
I may stand an equal chance with the rest, in  
the coming Dawn ?

And thus there is peace, sweet Alice, peace  
sometimes even for me,  
Though the years float on like sea-weed adrift  
on a stagnant sea !





## AGNES LILIENKRON, THE FORSAKEN.



TO the sea-shore? Down by the bay? To-  
morrow? Going so soon?  
Oh to watch the silent ships asleep in the mid-  
night moon!

Oh to hear the dip of an oar and the grating of  
a keel  
And the sound of a step on the shore that my  
waiting heart could feel!

Have I ever been there? Yes, once,—years  
ago!—I learned by heart  
Every turn and wind of the shore!—your par-  
don, sir!—tears will start,

But you seemed so kindly, sir,—to have a heart  
somewhere—  
That I trusted you,—couldn't help it—'twas  
your face, sir, and manly air,—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And I could have loved you—madly—but I  
have no heart, sir, here !—  
It's down there, down by the sea-shore, dead,  
dead this many a year !

Dead ? As good as dead, though it throbs and  
throbs in its endless pain !  
*He's* there !—the lord of my life !—*was* there—  
whom I'll never see again !

Perchance he is gone—gone again—and an-  
other widowed heart  
Is broken and crazed like mine !—Tomorrow,  
you say, you start ?

Perhaps you will meet him ! And then, will you  
bear him a message from me,  
And tell him I love him still, and pine for the  
moonlit sea,

And the boat that used to glide like a dream on  
the rising tide  
Far out on the evening bay—and *he* was by my  
side !—

You will think me frail, I know, but I'd sell my  
hopes of heaven  
To lie in his arms tonight—nor ask to be for-  
given

AGNES LILIENKRON, THE FORSAKEN.

If only the day never dawned to tear me away  
from him !—

I'd rather be tortured, or burned, or severed  
limb from limb !—

Oh the exquisite bliss of yielding to his impas-  
sioned will !

Oh the clasp of his mighty arms—I can feel  
them holding me still !

Oh the kiss that sent the blood flood-tiding up  
to the lips

And coursing and thrilling and tingling from  
the heart to the finger-tips !

You're startled ? We were wedded, sir, wed-  
ded, and never a chaster bride

Graced a marriage feast, or sat by her honored  
husband's side.

But scarcely a year and a day,—and down by  
the moonlit sea

A serpent our Paradise entered, to ruin my love  
and me !

An ugly rumor was whispered, that said I  
wasn't his wife,

But only a mistress, at best,—and the helpless  
innocent life

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That was nestling under my heart, could never  
wear his name,  
Nor look the world in the face !—And then a  
woman came,

A beautiful haggard face, that had suffered  
deeper than I,  
And told a pitiful story—of love in the days  
gone by—

Of a broken heart--of love by an artful mis-  
tress stolen,  
Till I cursed the robber, and wept,—her eyes  
with tears were swollen !

I asked her the villain's name. With a sob she  
turned aside,  
Uncovered the face of her babe, and said with  
a broken pride :

“There, madam, read in its face the name it  
ought to bear !  
I've come to ferret him out—the beast in his  
seaside lair !

He is here, somewhere, I know. They said he  
was seen on the bay—  
Came nightly ashore, or rowed for hours where  
the shadows lay

AGNES LILIENKRON, THE FORSAKEN.

With his leman in the bow—Have you seen  
him, lady?—those eyes,  
That face?” I started—’twas *he*!—I ques-  
tioned in quick surprise,

His name? Great God! It was *his*!—“Low  
slanderer, be gone!” I cried;—  
“My husband?” Belike! And *mine*, and  
others enough beside!

Has he limed you, too? Ah, well! Be happy  
and love him still.  
I leave him to you and yours and the curse of a  
wandering will.

I would his hand had slain me!—It strangled  
two others before—  
But my babe and I are doomed to bear one  
trial the more.

Farewell!” She said, and was gone. And *he*  
was gone! That day  
A vessel lifted anchor and sailed and sailed  
away,

And never since then have I heard the dipping  
of an oar,  
And never a grating keel, or the sound of a  
step on the shore.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

They brought me home again—a falcon with  
pinions clipped—

I heard from him once—he was back where the  
splashing oars had dipped.

I tried to run away, but they caught and  
brought me here,

A prisoner—held by an oath and a dying  
mother's tear!—

My babe? I killed it, sir, killed it, blighted its  
budding life

Before it could dream or know men's jealousy  
and strife.

And since then I haven't a heart, but only a  
stone somewhere

In my bosom, that weighs me down like a ton  
of dead despair!

But a woman is foolish and frail, and cannot  
master her will!

I loved him—I worshipped him then—I love  
and worship him still.

And I'd creep in the dust to his feet, and plead  
to be loved again,

Though he spurned me and gave me instead a  
death of infinite pain!

## HERMANN SAMSEL.



I OUGHT to be grateful? Ah, well! Is  
gratitude only a duty  
To be felt by an effort of will? toward a  
fiend? or a brute? where no beauty

Of heart or soul impels it? I ought to love her,  
I'm told  
By a threadbare text of the law, but feelings  
are bought and sold

By an equal exchange of love, or an equal bar-  
ter of hate,  
And the scales are just and true, that mete out  
weight for weight,

And they dip with the heft of a hair, while a  
god looks on to repay,  
Each moment its own perfect guerdon, each  
moment its judgment day.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I ought to honor her? That my days may be  
long in the land?

'Twere better I ween, for me, had she stayed  
her murderous hand,—

Or better, perchance, had not failed to throttle  
my dawning life,—

I never had hated her then nor known this mad-  
dening strife,—

Oh that I never had been, that the day of my  
birth were dead,

That an infinite night had swallowed forever  
this infinite dread

Of being and doing and thinking in endless  
mad career,

The sport of an inborn hate, of frenzy and  
gloom and fear!

You are happy? and others, too? and a mother's  
love has blessed?

And home is as snug and warm as the callow  
birdling's nest?

Well, be happy and grateful and good, for such  
is your glad birthright,

For the stars that shone on your birth made a  
glad and tranquil night



HERMANN SAMSELS.

For the mother who felt on her breast the  
touch of your innocent lips  
And followed, forgetting her pain, the wander-  
ing finger-tips

As they started and grasped at naught. She  
loved your faintest breath.  
But if she had loathed you, instead, and cursed  
you and plotted your death?

My mother? Bone of her bone, and flesh of  
her flesh, too true!  
And her blood is pent in my veins with a venom-  
ous flood-tide, too.

Does that make a mother, forsooth? that like  
an outcast bud  
She surrendered the protoplasm, and nourished  
it with her blood?

It is love, not blood, that makes the soul of kin-  
ship, for me,  
And loving care makes the mother, as long as  
Time shall be!

But why do I rage? I ought to be mute nor  
her slumbers molest  
When the grass has been green for years that  
covers her harmless breast?

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Harmless? 'Tis hard to say, if the harm is  
over so soon,  
And the harvest, sown in the years, all garner'd with the moon

That wanes o'er the fresh-dug grave ! I feel it  
within me still,  
That her every loathing thought and murderous  
purpose of will

Are built into flesh and bone and burned into  
nerve and brain  
Till I hate the whole world, and myself, and  
gloat o'er its burden of pain,

With a demonish joy that the rest are shut from  
their Paradise too,  
And the Earth is a crowded bedlam, all madness  
through and through.

The years never hear a prayer, and thoughts  
are as deathless as deeds,  
And never a love or a hate, but bears the hidden  
seeds

Of endless loving and hating. The world is a  
growth and a law,  
And the dead mold the living, for aye, with  
fated perfection or flaw.

Harmless? When I am dead, and my madness  
and crimes are dead,  
But a poisoned well until—Beware! Hath not  
God said :

“Judge not” and “Vengeance is mine”? Yea,  
he judged, and I am the curse  
He denounced at his judgment day. From a  
salt and bitter source

The waters of Marah have flowed. My mother  
attempted to slay—  
A silk and damask sin, but common enough to-  
day—

Her babe,—and wrought for herself a slow and  
lingering death,  
And Azrael came with the Angel of Life, when  
it wailed for breath.

She is under the sod—frail flesh—I’d pity her  
if I could—  
Perchance she was wronged—and by *him*—who  
never understood

How a woman’s soul can loathe, what a woman’s  
hand can do,  
When the choosing or refusing is a right too  
strange and new

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

For the mother to claim,—my *father*, a sleek  
conventional soul  
Who never was vexed with a doubt that *his*  
morals were sound and whole,

Who knew what virtue meant, and prized it in  
his home,  
And while his passions were stilled, was never  
known to roam,

Who was reckoned chaste enough, by the letter  
of the law,—  
But a woman's heart was breaking—rebellious  
demons saw

The empty room in her heart, and filled it with  
murderous hate.  
And I am her victim, and *his*. A strange un-  
common fate ?

Thank God if it were ! 'Tis enough if *one*  
should drain such a cup !  
But a million more,—God forbid, that more be  
offered up,

While Belial's altar smokes with the blood of  
babes unborn,  
And mothers with empty arms look cold and  
refuse to mourn !

## THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.



CAN it be? How *could* he do it? How could  
he be so cruel  
To rob me and basely defraud me of man's  
most precious jewel?

*Can* it be? Is he father, or uncle? Am I  
bastard, or son?  
Why did they set me thinking of where my life  
began?

Is it not gall enough to be orphaned twenty  
years,  
That they give me a father and mother, and a  
shame too burning for tears?

Give me my orphanage back! Take away the  
brand of shame!  
Give me my dead to love, and not the living to  
blame!

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Who called me a bastard? A Voice! A mere  
intangible thing  
That whispered an ugly guess at the mystery  
whence I spring!

Let it pass! None knows! Who can read in  
the blank of a passionless face  
That deep in the heart are lurking suspicions of  
disgrace?

I'll crush it! I'll live it down! I'll bury it all  
so deep,  
That none but me can know of its awful hidden  
sleep!

I bury it? Crush it? Kill it? A thing that  
can never die  
While a hundred feel it and know it, other than  
he and I?

She knows it—his victim—my mother, and  
others all around,  
For twenty years is too short for all to be under  
the ground,

Who knew of the scandal then, and his lascivious  
stealth,  
But winked and condoned it all, because of his  
title and wealth.

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

And they'll pass me every day, and smile and  
shake their head:

"He's the Bastard of old Sir Hughs, who wandered  
before he was wed."

But I rave! It is all a lie, a cruel, hateful lie  
Born of a morbid fancy! I'll conquer it bye  
and bye!

For I had a mother once. I remember a warm  
sweet face  
That bent above me and smiled, with a dear  
unspeakable grace.

I remember a clear low voice, that crooned  
sweet lullabies,  
And I loved to lie and listen, with half-shut  
dreaming eyes,

Till I fell asleep in her arms. Was it she that  
bent above me,—  
My mother,—or only a nurse just hired with  
gold to love me?

I remember a time when they came,—they tried  
to take me away,  
And I struggled and clung to her still, and  
fought and kept them at bay

With endless kicking and screaming, till I  
heard a gruff voice say:—

“Come, woman, it’s time to go!” Then she  
wept and fainted away

And fell on the floor before him. The rest is  
all a blur—

I was hurried away—to the North—to the cold  
—away from her.

How could they be hard to a mother? Or if it  
was only a nurse,

A pest fall on his body, and on his soul my  
curse!

And, my name is not Sir Hughs’. If he is my  
uncle in sooth,

She must have been his sister, for if he told me  
the truth,

He himself is an only son of an old and blooded  
race.

Then why have not I, like his son, a full-blown  
lusty face,

With eyes like the English skies, and cheeks  
like the English rose,

And whiskers of amber ale that froths and  
foams as it flows?



THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

For mine is an ample brow, and features nervous and thin—

Not a trace of English blood, by my glass, from forehead to chin !

He loves me, he said to me once, because I've my mother's face.

Why should *he* love an olive skin and eyes of a duskier race ?

Great God ! Can it be ? Have I guessed it ? the horrible branding truth ?

He told me of summers in Italy, of wild oats sown in his youth.

Had he loved an Italian maid, or Alpine herdsman's girl,

And fooled her with vows and pledges unmeet for the son of an earl ?

Had he left her at length to bear alone their mutual blame,

And give me birth and suckle me into a life of shame ?

O mother ! My blameless mother ! Whom too much trust betrayed

To the amorous touch of a brute, who would not be gainsaid !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I loathe him, I hate him forever, with a bound-  
less burning hate,  
That never on earth or in hell shall be gluttoned  
or satiate !

Hate *him* ? Hate a father to whom with all his  
faults I owe  
My life and all I have been in the happy long  
ago ?

For I have been happy, at least, and could be  
happy still  
If a devilish voice could be muffled by strength  
of human will.

For mayhap he is what he says—an uncle, and  
nothing to me  
But the kindest soul among men !—But why this  
secrecy ?

Why not tell me about my mother ? I am mad  
with longing to love her !  
If dead, let me go and weep with my lips in the  
dust above her !

If living,—just God forgive if I wrongly curse  
the hand  
That tore me away from her, perchance in a  
foreign land !

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

O clasp me again to thy heart, sweet mother,  
and sing me to sleep !

I am tired of this hideous dream !— But it's long  
since I saw her weep,

And who knows where she is to-day? De-  
spised? Adrift on the street?

And touched with a loathsome pest, and foul  
from her head to her feet?

And driven to shame by him? I'd kill him if I  
knew

Such blood were coursing and tingling my arter-  
ies through and through !

Why am I not all to-day that the devils in hell  
could wish,

If a double stream of lust had built this quiver-  
ing flesh ?

Nay *she* was pure, at least ! *Was* pure ! God  
rest her soul,

If one false step in her youth left her body  
stained and unwhole !

Go and ask *him*? Ask *all*? I dare not. He'd  
shrug his shoulders and smile,

He dare not own me the truth, though I guessed  
it all the while.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And I'd choose for one, to suffer the horror of  
doubtful blame  
Rather than face the blighting knowledge of  
certain shame !

And whatever else may come, and whatever else  
may be,  
All the light and the joy of living is gone for-  
ever from me !



## VIRGINIUS.



HAVE I ever hated a man? Yes, once, in the  
days gone by,  
I hated him—hate him still,—and shall until I  
die.

His crime? Not a crime at all! There are  
things far worse than crimes  
That are done, untouched by the law, condoned  
by the fledgling times!

Is a murder, that ends a life, half as bad as the  
dastardly deed  
That makes the soul writhe forever, the heart  
incessantly bleed?

Is assault with bludgeon or fist and the purple  
aching flesh,  
That will heal in a week or two, and be sound  
and whole afresh,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Half as hard to bear, as the thrust that wounds  
a sensitive soul  
And leaves its poison to spread till its virus in-  
flames the whole?

Is theft of a purse half as bad as the theft of a  
hope or a love  
That budded and bloomed as fair as the aspho-  
dels fabled above?

He came with an oily tongue, and a manner so  
winning kind,  
And an eye that worshipped me, and made me  
too too blind,

Till the devilish deed was done. Could I for a  
moment dream  
That a thing so foul as he so gentle and fair  
might seem?

But his whitewashed face concealed the black-  
ness of his heart  
Till the plague-spot rotted through,—and be-  
trayed his hellish art,—

But the bloom was gone—and her life was  
blighted,—a pure sweet child,  
*My* child, my *only* child, by an oily-tongued  
villain defiled,—

VIRGINIUS.

Too young to guard herself, too old for the law's  
defense,

A fresh young partridge to him, just fatted to  
please his sense.

Why didn't he kill her, and end forever her  
blighted life?

Or why did not I,—a belated Virginius,—give  
her to wife

In the land of shadows and ghosts to the skele-  
ton arms of Death?

A kindlier fate than to live, with the withering  
poisoned breath

Of social scandal upon her, a mark for lascivi-  
ous eyes,

The talk of the town, till the next that falls an  
unguarded prize

In the confidence game of life, where honor is  
all in all

In a woman's lily soul,—its loss the bitterest  
gall,—

But man, the superior brute, counts honor ser-  
vility,

The badge of a slavish soul ashamed or afraid  
to be free.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Down with distinctions of sex ! Long live the  
Woman, I say !

And a knotted cord for the back of the brute  
who dares to lay

Unequal burdens on her ? One code, one brand  
for them both !

Let him be shunned like the pest, his fellows all  
be loth

To graze the sleeve of his coat ! Let the con-  
demnation fall

Upon the source of the woe,—or, lovingly lift  
the pall

That hangs o'er his helpless victim ! Hold her  
as white as him !

Hobnob with her, too, and forget, and fill Life's  
cup to the brim,

And quaff it down ! Vivat ! Fill up her bar-  
ren years

With a home, and love, and children, and wipe  
away her tears

With Society's silken kerchief. Alas, the brute  
is alive

Beneath the washing of culture ! Let her go to  
the dive !



VIRGINIUS.

Nay, *my* flesh ! Sweet and clean her soul and  
body shall be,  
But the world is not large enough to shelter  
both him and me !

If his shadow darkens my home, or his foot  
shall seek my door,  
I'll strike him down where he stands and pay  
my hatred's score.



## THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.



They stood together in curtained gloom,  
Husband and wife by the laws decree,  
Alone in the face of a crushing doom,  
Alone in the bitter agony  
Of keeping the law, without a flaw,  
Though the spirit of love go unfulfilled,  
Guarding the vessel with pious awe  
When the choicest wine of life is spilled.

Dumb with an anguish they could not speak,  
Mute with a truth they dared not face,  
Heart to heart, and cheek to cheek,  
They convulsively clung in a long embrace,  
As if the years could melt to tears,  
And gush away to oblivion,  
Leaving but love that doubts nor fears  
And the troth they had plighted years ago.

THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

“Uphold me, I faint !” The fated word  
Burst from her lips. The woe suppressed  
Of her choking voice, his bosom stirred :  
“Clasp me close, ay close to thy throbbing  
breast !

My heart is bleeding, my soul is pleading,  
For words that were spoken so often of yore,  
My life in its passionate interceding  
Unheard is withering evermore !”

“They said, thou art false, thou art hollow and  
cold,

Thou lovest me not, thou art weary of me.  
I heard when their slanderous tongues grew bold.  
They were false and cruel. I trusted thee.  
But I never knew, for thy words were few  
And thy brow grew dark when I came to thee,  
If deep in its cold thy heart beat true  
And cherished its old sweet dreams of me.”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“And I wept in silence and all alone,  
Alone and unmarked for thy sweet sake,  
For thou wert mute and sadder grown,—  
I wept at their lies till my heart would break.  
Oh Love, give me my love ! I ask but for love !  
I am dying of doubt,—dying, dying each day,  
For a word, for a look, that like rain from above  
Could make my poor withered heart blossom  
for aye !”

“Thou wert gone from our home so oft, so long,  
Thou wert colder and sadder at each return  
Till I yearned,—God forgive, if the wish was  
wrong !—  
As only a mother’s heart can yearn,  
For our one dead child with its eyes that smiled,  
To come from its lily-nestled rest  
And soothe my heart with its presence mild  
And cool with its lips my burning breast !”

THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

“Then I thought in my soul—for dull pain warps  
The soul’s clear sight with its cheating glass—  
’Twere better to be a cold cold corpse  
And slumber beneath the quiet grass,  
In my darling’s bed, with a stone at my head  
To guard forever our dreamless sleep,  
And I almost envied the peaceful dead,  
At rest, and never again to weep !”

“My heart, though crushed, at first was loth  
To dream of a life apart from thee;  
But hath God sworn with a mighty oath,  
That Law is stronger than Destiny?  
Must our marriage vow be held sacred now  
When it curses two lives and blesses none?  
Must we bear on pinched cheek and brow  
The blight of the ten dead years that are  
gone ?”

“Look on yon half-veiled portrait ! See !  
The tender eyes are so full of bliss.  
She is dreaming still—ay dreaming of thee,  
Of a murmured pledge, and one lingering kiss !  
Then look on my tear-sunken eye !  
Oh God, had we never loved and wed !  
Let us crush forever this formal lie,  
And part ! I would that I were dead !”

Her weak arms slipped from his close embrace—  
He pillowed her head on his trembling knee—  
His tears fell hot on her upturned face—  
And his white lips quivered in agony :  
“They slandered thee, as they slandered me !  
They were hellish lies but they burned in my  
brain !  
O God, forgive ! I have murdered thee !”  
And he kissed her pale cold lips again !

# THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

## A MEMORIAL PIECE.



### I

HANG on the wreath !  
Wind the old battle-flag round his tomb,  
Its torn folds sweeping his grave,  
For underneath  
Sleeps one of the brave !  
White roses droop o'er his hallowed dust,  
From their dewy lips exhaling perfume,  
While the late May winds in frolic blow,  
And scatter their petals like flakes of snow  
At every fitful gust.

## SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

### II

O sacred Memorial Day  
    When the Nation remembers her dead !  
O holy tribute the loyal pay  
    Of love and tears for the blood they shed !  
        Let the cannon boom !  
While the gray old heroes come  
    Mustering to the rolling drum !  
        Make room ! Make room !  
For the gallant column marching down  
    Out of the town  
    To salute the dead !  
    Let the prayer be said,  
    And the farewell gun  
    Be shot o'er each comrade's grave !  
'The crowd is gone. The rites are done.  
    All honor to the brave !



## THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

### III

Hang on the wreath !  
Wind the torn battle-flag round his tomb !  
For underneath  
Sleeps the dust of the brave !  
Lost in earth's sepulchral gloom,  
He rests alone,  
Unmarked and unknown,  
And no martial pageant shall honor his grave,  
For the gay young world remembers not,  
And his grizzled comrades forget the spot,  
But the sun shall fail,  
And the moon wax pale,  
And the stars of night in darkness set,  
Ere the Tunker maiden's heart forget.

IV

Hang on the wreath !  
Wind the stained battle-flag round his tomb,  
Its torn folds sweeping his grave !  
For its stains are red  
With the blood of the dead  
That sleep the sleep of the brave !  
Through thee alone and thy sweet faith,  
Fair maid of the loyal heart,  
Hath he his part  
In the drum's glad beat and the cannon's boom !  
Ay ! Bury thy head in the long grave grass,  
While the dead dead years in memory pass !

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

V

Brave hearts and true, all hail !

Blood and treasure

Without measure

Flow around their country's altar,

They, the true hearts, never falter.

Hail, all hail !

Columbia's matchless womanhood !

Never enemy withstood

Such a banded sisterhood !

For their cheers and tears, through the bitter  
years,

While the flag was rent in twain,

Love-lighted the gory path of glory,

Till the flag was one again !

VI

And thou, sweet maiden, royal hearted,  
When thy gallant love departed,  
All thy hopes save one were blighted.  
'Twas the day your hearts were plighted  
That the shot from Sumter frightened  
All the slumbering North awake.  
All thy peaceful Elders spake  
Words of patience and endurance,  
With a calm and high assurance  
That Almighty God doth rule,  
That his ways are dark and hidden,  
And to question is forbidden  
To the children of Christ's school.  
Plain gray-bearded nonconformers  
Counseled peace, and counseled quiet  
Abstinence from war's loud riot.  
Stern descendents of reformers  
Prayed for mercy, prayed for peace.  
When Satan raged in war's increase,  
They thought upon their herds and flocks,

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

Shook their Nazaritic locks,  
And remained at home, secure,  
And kept their robes unworldly pure.  
But one sweet maiden, loyal-hearted,  
When the shot from Sumter boomed,  
Heard the voice of God, and started,  
For she felt her country doomed,  
And a pleading bondman's moan  
Grew a deathless undertone  
To the cannon's bursting thunder  
That rent the Union flag asunder.

“Pray for peace, O reverend Fathers !  
Weep and wonder, pitying Mothers !  
While the Nation swiftly gathers  
Precious gifts of blood from others !  
But if we pray for peace, we'll fight for't,  
And strive with sturdy right arm's might for't,  
And spill our heart's blood with delight for't,  
And God will stand upon our right for't,  
And bless our loyal brothers ! ”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES,

VII

Hang on the wreath !  
Wind the old battle-flag round his tomb !  
For underneath,  
Wrapped in hallowed earth's embraces,  
He sleeps till the day of doom !  
He alone of that godly few  
The voice of his clear-souled sibyl knew,  
Doffed his coat of somber hue,  
And donned the Union's patriot blue,  
And, taking thy "god speed" full of kisses,  
Went to pray with his armed right hand  
For the righteous cause of his bleeding land.

Thee for thy daring words they thrust  
Out of the church, like a worm of the dust,  
Of worldly pride and striving full,  
Rebellious 'gainst Christ's gentle rule,  
Misled, misleading God's own elect.  
Anathema, maranatha !!

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

VIII

Hang on the wreath !  
Wind the torn battle-flag round his tomb !  
For underneath  
Sleep the hopes of thirty years.  
Others have garnered the harvest of tears  
That were sown by thee so long ago  
In the days of the Nation's doom !  
Ay ! Bury thy head in the long grave grass,  
While the dead dead years in memory pass,  
And a flurry of scented snow  
Falls on thy silvered locks below !  
Clasp him again in thy arms as of yore,  
When, wounded and dying, he came from  
the war.  
Nurse him patiently now as then.  
Kiss him tenderly. Tell him again  
How nobly he fought and how brave.  
And bless the blood that he gladly gave,  
That the flag might be one that was rent in  
twain.  
Ay ! Weep as his tired eye-lids close !  
But the God of nations knows  
Thine was the greater sacrifice.  
Thou hast paid the richer price  
For the victory over his foes !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

IX

O sacred Memorial Day  
When the Nation remembers her dead !  
O holy tribute the loyal pay  
Of love and tears for the blood they shed !  
Let the cannon boom !  
While the gray old heroes come  
Mustering to the rolling drum !  
Make room ! Make room !  
For the gallant column marching down  
Out of the town  
To salute the dead !  
Let the prayer be said,  
And the farewell gun  
Be shot o'er each comrade's grave !  
Farewell ! Farewell ! The rites are done !  
Sleep on, Immortal Band, sleep on,  
Into the morrow's golden dawn !  
Shout for the joy of it, shout,  
Ye for whom the battle was won !  
Ring, glad bells, ring merrily out,  
Ye that knolled when the red blood run !



THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!  
All honor to the brave!  
But hail, all hail, to the Womanhood  
That back of our gallant army stood!  
Whose cheers and tears, through the bitter  
years,  
While the flag was rent in twain,  
Love-lighted the gory path of glory,  
Till the flag was *one* again!



## THE POET'S PROTHALAMION



SWEET Love, my bride and wife to be, come  
                  thou

And nestle on my heart, for I would give  
One half this world, were all its treasures mine,  
To hold thee in my empty arms once more,  
And I would give it all, though richer far  
Than a world of worlds, to kiss thee on the lips  
With burning, lingering kisses, till my soul  
Grew satisfied, and I would pawn my heart  
Still throbbing with its young delirious life,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Nor hold my very soul too dear a price  
For one embrace or one touch of these lips  
On thy white unveiled bosom ! Come, my Love,  
My Paragon of women, my heart's Queen,  
And Queen of home to be, life's dial points  
To where the dewy morning greets the noon !  
Too soon our morn will be the afternoon !  
Stay not too long, but come ere the dew is gone !  
We'll wander hand in hand adown this world  
And find somewhere among the haunts of men  
A cosy bit of Eden, blooming still  
For thee and me ! Come with thy household ways  
And dear domestic skill, and at thy touch

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Some ivy-clambered lodge among the trees,  
Or narrow cottage on a nameless street  
Were home ! Stay not within thy father's house  
To close his eyes into their latest sleep,  
Though he hath loved thee dearer than his life !  
Stay not to cheer thy mother's faltering age,  
Though her heart break to let thee go, but come !  
New duty calls thee into larger life !  
Dear lips that cannot speak are pleading, come !  
Fulfill my manhood ! Slip the leash of fate,  
And rise to the full glory of womanhood !  
Dost linger still ? My soul is crushed with pain.  
I need thee. O sustain me languishing  
In this unquenched thirst for life and love !

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Wake not despair ! Fulfill thy plighted troth !  
Couldst thou forget ? Or dreamest thou that love  
Is dearer in the bloom than in the gold  
Of harvest ? Come into the twilight, down  
Among the thick-set pines and cedar-clumps,  
And I will pluck a twig, and whisper low  
Its deathless message sweet : " I live for thee ! "  
And thou wilt lay its fadeless leaves among  
The folds of drapery soft, nearest thy heart,  
And thank me with a look that would repay  
The toil of an archangel. Here, alone,  
Imparadised, and lip to lip, none near  
Save God to hear me at confessional,  
I'll tell thee all my love, and thy chaste ear  
Will love the tale, and hold it fair and pure  
As that white lily that once lay, at eve,  
Like baby lips about the areole  
Of each white breast, when thou didst dream  
    of lips  
That yet should be, and thou didst breathe a  
    prayer

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That brake in twain the alabaster-box  
Of womanhood, that all the night grew sweet  
With scent of spikenard and rich attar of rose.  
Perchance in Passion's aura subtly held,  
As in sweet incense, thou wilt feel once more  
Love's warm compulsion unto higher things  
And come !

I know not when our love begun.  
I only know we met beside the sea,  
In that vast wilderness of stone, whose piles  
Behold the lordly Hudson, where his waves  
Make young the hoar Atlantic and upbear  
In conscious pride the navies of the world,—  
Not pleasure-seekers bent on killing time,  
Breasting the surf, or idling on the beach,  
Nor bent on conquest, thou, nor vain display,  
Nor I on shekels most ignobly got  
By wedging ten gaunt fingers in between  
The toiler and the eater for the tithes

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Unearned, that honest toil is doomed to pay  
The priests of Pluto for their idle keep.  
Four study walls immured us from the world,  
Three tiresome flights of steps above the din  
And ceaseless thunder of the granite streets,  
To learned seclusion, where old Nestor spake,—  
Our Nestor,—quiet else save that anon  
The chime of Grace church, standing near,  
                  stole through  
The open casement. Equal thirst for truth  
Led us to one clear fount. We sought a world  
Within the phantom chambers of the brain,  
A language sculptured on the plastic face.  
We spake; then, first, I felt that I had swung  
Across the orbit of some fair new star  
That drew me with compulsion after her  
To girdle her afar with awed delight.  
We spake again; of Avon's deathless bard,  
Of Schiller, the beloved Idealist,  
Of Milton's mighty music, and the steep  
Wild journey of the exiled Florentine,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Of him who sung of Arthur and his court,  
Of him who told Acadia's exodus  
In sweetest verse, of Weimar's eldest bard,  
Immortal Goethe-Faust, and many more  
Of humbler strain, but fresh from the World-  
heart,  
And Art drew all my orbit unto thee.  
Again we spake ; and chance—or, haply, Fate,—  
Drave me to tear aside from the dead years  
Their veil, and thou didst see my panting soul  
Beating its wings against the mortal bars  
Of narrow circumstance, with generous aims,  
But bruised and beaten back at every flight,  
And thou wert gentle as one knowing pain—  
The pain of endless climbing, endless fall.—  
At length the low sweet music of thy voice  
Brake through the discord, and my wounds were  
healed.



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Thou gavest a talisman—a card and verse—  
A trifle, but the world's a trifle too !—  
“A flag and chart to guide thy daring craft  
Across Life's stormy sea.” And then I knew—  
Not pity, pity is for the weak and blind,—  
But sympathy, magnanimous and kind.  
Thou wert mine angel in a time of need.

Thus, day by day, in sweet communion, fled  
The dancing Hours adown their endless cycles,  
From dawn to dusk, from dusk to radiant dawn,  
From silent greetings unto low adieus,  
From sad adieus to early greetings glad,  
And yet we dreamed not that our lives were  
    paired,  
Like double stars, for an eternal flight.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But once, by haunting memories impelled  
Of one false maid—or fickle lass, perchance,  
Youth makes a mighty grief of slender staff,—  
I said so bitterly: “I lost all faith—”  
I know not whither tended all my thought.  
I saw thy look of infinite pain, and read  
Thy questioning eyes, but answered not. Next  
    morn,  
Thy pain found speech, and plead with earnest  
    lips  
And face aglow, for faith in woman’s love  
And trust in woman’s truth, though one were  
    false.  
And, looking on thy tender pleading lips,  
And searching all thy soul in thy clear eyes,—  
How bright, how near they beam, dear Heart,  
    for mine  
Do mirror all their tears and smiles in thine,  
And see the laughing cherubim, who stand,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

As in two gates of Eden to defend  
Our love from rude intrusion!—I had sworn  
Thou wert the noblest of all womankind,—  
The gentlest truest woman of the world.  
I cast mine eyes down, smitten with quick shame,  
And uttered broken words of faith new-born,  
Of trust awakened from deep lethargy,  
And all thy pain grew into radiance.  
I felt like some despairing soul that clutched  
The stole of its good angel, and so climbed  
To Heaven's portals. On that day of days,  
No mild-eyed saint at her Marienbild,  
No votary of the blessed burning heart,  
Learned sweeter reverence than I who stood  
O'erwhelmed by the eternal womanhood  
That trembled on thy speaking lips, and glowed  
In thy lithe form—embodied eloquence.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

From that hour unto this thou wert to me  
A world—a hope ! Thou art my world. With thee  
Is life and love, though all were dead beside.  
Without thee, all were dead and cold and drear.  
Lay thy right hand upon my brow ! What warmth  
Electric ! Heaven grant it ne'er grow cold—  
So cold—and lie across thy cold white breast,  
Clasping a lily white, to mock my soul  
With resurrection hopes, for hope is none  
With my White Lily withered ! One warm kiss,  
One touch of thy soft hand on cheek and brow  
Is more than all my dreamland interests !  
One look of thy confiding eyes in mine  
Is dearer than a thousand memories  
That linger in the chambers of the dead !

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

The Hours danced on, and, arm in arm, the  
Graces,  
The sacred Nine, and latest born of Zeus,  
All-searching Science hundred-eyed, and Mirth,  
And all the nymphs of sunlight, wave and storm  
And autumn hills, and the stern Sisters Three,  
Wove magic circles narrowing round our steps,  
And when of all the Hours the saddest came,  
She found us—lovers—Then, Aufwiedersehen !  
We could not wholly part. With kindred aims,  
Art-conquered to one love of beauty, bound  
By sympathy that touched life's deepest chords,  
Each trusting each and reverencing each, o'er  
such  
One Hour alone hath power,—life's Tyrant grim.

Dost thou remember the wee note that begged,—  
If naught with thee or thine should tell me nay,—  
To know thee longer though so far away ?—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

The pen dared name thee gentlest, truest, best,  
Ere yet my lips dared tell thee face to face !

Hard on an hour of banqueting and mirth  
Our parting came. Down by the sounding sea,  
We watched the silent ships that o'er the wave  
Must bear thee soon to old New England's snows,  
And thought how many leagues of land and sea  
Must drift between us ere the morrow eve.  
We talked of home, and long-gone happenings,  
And sunny Southland travels, spake aught else  
Save what the heart was full of. Idle words !  
For Fate is Fate ! Saidst thou indeed farewell ?  
Or was it silence trembling ? Ah, farewell !  
A lingering hand-clasp—and, in truth, farewell !

Then homeward bound beneath the evening  
star  
That westward, ever westward fled ! Ah, me !  
I had no home ! The mighty instinct woke

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

That drives the full-fledged nestling from his  
down,

And fills his throbbing throat with love-calls loud.

A stranger, I returned to that loved spot

That once was home. Yet, though I sat at ease

In shady haunts well-loved of earlier years,

My heart was restless still, and yearned for  
home,—

A vision of quiet Paradise with thee,

That dimmed all nearer joys with roseate hues.

Love grows by silence swifter than by speech,

And oft at dead of night, I whispered soft,—

So soft that only mine own soul could hear ;—

“I love thee.” Once, a vision white, thou camest,

A Dream-Hypatia with hair unbound

And white arms bare, that drew me gently down

And set dream kisses on my sleeping lips

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That thence grew strong to tell thee my young  
love.

“I’ll win thee, love thee, live for thee,” I said;  
And thy heart answered sweetly; “Wait and  
hope!”

A fountain in the desert, fed afar  
In sun-kisst ice or storm-drenched highland  
plains,  
Once burst from subterranean caverns deep,  
Wells forth perennial in the waste of sand,  
And builds from dearth an oasis of palm,—  
A smile of God,—a kiss of Heaven, set  
On fevered lips that thirsted unto death.  
And such is love, fed from the heights of Being,  
The hidden currents flowing leagues beneath  
A waste of life, when lo! it gushes forth,  
And all the waste blooms into garden! Thus  
At the sweet words that half confessed thy love,  
My soul became a Garden of the Gods,  
Where no base thing could enter in, or dwell.



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

But life is earnest ! And far be it from us  
To build on sentiment alone the hope  
Of happy golden weddings and the shout  
Of children's children in our ample halls !

A dearer thing than passion and more strong  
Is love,—not that blind groping thing that grasps  
The wheel of Fate, content with idle chance,  
But Love, the Argos-eyed, that sees and knows  
Life's Inwardness, nor cheats itself with dreams  
Of swan-white necks, and languishing sweet eyes,  
And fadeless cheeks, and sculptured brows of  
snow,  
And faultless breasts that quiver at each step  
In the gay dance, and finger-tips that run,  
Bejeweled, lightly o'er the sounding keys.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Feeling is life, and love is life intense,  
But feeling is sharp pain, and love a burning,  
That wastes and withers life itself to ash,  
When blindly kindled and all uncontrolled.  
Therefore we tore the bandage from Love's eyes,  
And gave him Reason for a faithful guide,  
And laid our hearts bare to his searching orbs,—  
Yea, tore aside the veil from inmost soul,—  
That no dark fold might prison secret night.  
Let others build on ever-shifting sands!  
We chose to build Life's during pyramid  
Deep-based in rock! Let others hotly chase  
Love's phantom in the dusk of young romance,  
But live to find the real cold and dead,—  
A long repenting in the halting years,  
A bitter weeping in night-silences,  
Or slow decay of noble humanhood  
That half besots the soul to low content  
With passion's burning but ephemeral joys.—

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

We chose to make Life's bridals chaste and calm,  
Where each might look in other's eyes and say;  
"I know thee wholly and without reserve."  
Romance is gone at sixty, but staid love  
Is not unmeet for younger blood. The dross  
Burns out in Life's hot crucible, and leaves  
The fleckless gold. Why not the gold at first?

Twelve happy moons bore love's swift  
messages,  
"Exchanging thoughts," we called it laughingly,  
Or, "bartering weeds from country hillsides steep  
For flowers of city growth." And thus we ranged  
O'er every field, rejoiced at every step,  
To find our thoughts and lives at one, attuned  
In fixed habit to sweet harmony.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

No heavenward-pointing spires, nor Sabbath-  
chimes  
Need crush to silence or awaken strife.  
No priest to shrive, no pastor nice to teach  
The way to heaven needed we who heard  
The voice of the Indweller, and had stood  
Beneath the stars together. Nor could aught  
Of state or statesmanship with party gall  
Embitter Life's full cup, nor shame our pride  
In the Republic's azure-fielded flag  
Whose bars of morning herald the new day  
Of Liberty, even then when woman's hand  
Grasps to the wheel, as sure it must and will,  
When earth rolls onward into perfect day.  
Nor could the tinsel and regalia  
Of secret orders shut within our hearts  
One thought, one deed, one joy, we dared not  
share.  
Nor could ambition tear our lives asunder,  
Nor knowledge, nor blue blood, nor lands, nor  
gold,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Nor honors won, nor aught that blights the most,  
And makes the marriage-vow a mockery.  
So like, we marveled how two souls could be  
So like, and ever growing liker, yet unlike,  
Each complementing each, and both, full-  
summed,—  
The perfect being !

When, at length, we met,  
And autumn leaves were falling, and the hearth  
Roared cheery to the sighing winds outside,  
And the long evenings lulled the earth to rest,  
And hours ran swift away in golden sands,  
Fate turned her glass. We sat together glad.  
“Thou badst me wait and hope. Canst tell me  
more ?  
I hoped and waited. Is it long enough ? ”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I said. I looked, and thy lips trembled sweet ;  
“ Yea, long enough ! ” Thy right hand stretched  
to me.

I clasped it. Our lips met. I held thee close  
To my wild throbbing heart ; “ Till Death us  
part ! ”

This was the soul's true nuptials, all alone  
With God for witness.

Since when we have known  
No law but Love's, and thy soul's purity,  
That lifts mine own to ever newer heights,  
Interprets it ; “ Whate'er is pure and good,  
That makes love richer nor abates nor mars  
Our chaste Ideal, shall be free as air  
For thee and me.” Yet happy he for whom  
The tarrying Hours withhold the marriage morn  
A while,—not all too long till the tired heart  
Grow sick with waiting,—for Love's law is  
chaste,—

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Not the sweet anarchy of passion freed,  
Nor license bitter-sweet,—and self-avenging,  
And stronger than our helmed Themis dreamed  
When founding states. Ay, happy he for whom  
Love's daily discipline of self-denial  
Grows sweet, ere Themis leads the blushing bride  
Into the nuptial chamber, and stands guard  
With her drawn sword o'er wedded privacy !  
Thrice happy he who bides his season well,  
Nor hopes for violets in December's flaw,  
And apples in the snow of orchard-blooms !

Love hastes not, but unfolds her loveliness,  
A modest rose that hides her virgin heart  
In tangled frets of emerald moss, till wooed  
By the dewy breath and kiss of morning. Thus,  
Ere we had learned her thousand dear delights,  
Fate tore us far asunder.

Then fair dreams,  
Hope-winged and gracious, hovered nightly o'er  
Our distant couches, or, delighted, trooped  
From room to room, with dreamland effluence

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Flooding the day. When snow lay on the roof,  
And in the Dovecote's haunted chamber roared  
The hearth-stone wide, and ample comfort  
gleamed

On wall and ceiling, camest thou to me  
Familiar sweet. And once the vision plead,  
All clinging lip to lip, with tender sighs,  
To prove me woman's love, and ease the pain  
Of pent-up passion, yet did quickly turn  
All sad away and weeping make complaint ;  
"Ah, me ! This heart is sealed ! Break thou the  
seals,

And bid its living waters flow to thee !  
I cannot love thee, Love, till thou love me !  
Fell Eden's fruitage down before thy feet,  
'Twere little prized ! The winning makes it  
sweet ! "

And, when I clasped thee in my passionate arms



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

As sweet Francesca with immortal love  
Clung to her lover in the dusks of Hell  
When storm-swift shrieking blasts tormenting  
    drave

The guilty shades athwart the dark abyss,  
They fell deceived and empty on my breast  
And I awoke. And thus from dream to dream  
With endless yearning fled the desolate hours,  
Till thou and I were dreams, I thine, thou  
    mine,—

Thou wert the block of Parian marble white,  
My love, the sculptor. I did dream thee fair,  
And thou art fair, not like a sculptor's dream  
With fixed eyes and bosom motionless,—  
A faultless frozen grace,—but Love's rich dream  
Where every look and every pose is fair,  
And all is life and soul and eloquence.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

When next we met, the strawberries kissed  
our lips  
With fragrant greeting, and the changeful May  
Was slipping into June, and our young lives  
Were slipping into June—the month of roses—  
What wonder then, if roses burst to bloom  
Imperishable as memory and fair  
As a child's soul !

The choicest rose that bloomed,  
Was love—not love of self nor love of each,  
But love of one not *each*, but all of *both*—  
Love's soul embodied into tendrils weak  
To cling with helpless wants about our lives,  
And link them with the touch of baby lips—  
A sweet wild rose that clambered o'er our lives;  
With warm profusion in the dew of June,  
Her leaves pearl-treasured, and her chalices  
Pale pink with beaded gossamers festooned,  
In innocent boldness peeping forth at will,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

God-honoring and not ashamed of Nature,  
Nor envying hot-house queens whose double  
    hearts,—  
A splendid sepulcher,—enfold no fruit.

    Through long day-dreaming fair familiar  
    grown,  
The Mother-Heart found voice, and thou didst  
    hold  
My head upon thy breast all tenderly ;  
“ Some day a child shall nestle where thou liest  
And feel mine arm's sustaining warm as thou ! ”  
I looked with questioning joy to thee : “ Our  
    child ? ”  
“ Yea, thine and mine, for I have loved it long ! ”  
May He whose dearest name is Love, fulfill  
These dreams ! 'Tis long since then, and yet we  
    dream  
The same dear dreams, and talk of days to come

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

When suitors bashful come to woo our girls  
And our own eldest brings his chosen bride  
For welcome, or yet later full of pride  
Brings home a sunny child all coos and smiles,  
And laugh that lovers whose far marriage morn  
Still sleeps unmarked in Time's unemptied urn  
Should talk of children's children and gray hairs.  
Yet still may He fulfill, who love ordained,  
These later dreams, for love is infinite  
And lives in one the future and the past,  
A triune omnipresent fulness—Life.

I laid my hand upon its resting-place  
As now—no purer touch was his that spake  
“Forbid them not” and blessed each innocent!—  
I breathed a burning prayer—such prayers do  
make

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Heaven's harmony—where words are none, but  
soul

Is large with thankfulness—that begs no boon,  
But overflows with a diviner sense

Of life's sufficiency—the soul's content,

And then I spake ; “God helping thee and me,

Thy child shall be as pure as heaven's breath

On our chaste brows, not gotten in amorous play

Of oft-repeated lust, a child of chance,

Chance loved, chance hated,—oft fore-doomed  
to death,

Or hateful vice more terrible than death,

The helpless victim of a mighty sin

That hides its loathesomeness in robes of law !

Nor shalt thou be a slave to my swift wish !

God maketh thee, not me, thine arbiter.

Thou lovest me—'tis all my soul dare ask—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And thou shalt be a virgin still, though wife,  
Till thine own heart shall plead for motherhood !”  
And thou wert glad. A new strange light beamed  
forth

From thy rich eyes. That ghastly shadow fled  
That frights a noble woman’s soul whene’er  
She dreams of marriage, lest the altar be  
Belial’s and not Hymen’s. “ May it be !  
God helping us” thou saidst ; “ I thank thee  
much ! ”

But sweetest thanks were tears wept silently.  
After long pause : “ O thou who lovest much,  
One boon I ask. This hand whose touch I love,  
Whose touch is love, O pledge me that it ne’er  
Shall strike the tender flesh of that sweet child ! ”  
A word—a look—and thou didst lift my hand  
To thy warm lips and cover it with kisses.

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Then, good night! A kiss on finger-tips—  
A white hand wafted in the dark—good night!

How like a drear November day hath been  
Our life! A gleam of sun through azure rifts  
Drunk in by frosted leaves that huddled close  
To windward of thick hedges, and in beds  
Of purling brooks, and then dull lead for hours!

When next we bade good-morrow and were  
glad,  
Mid-summer's sun was ushering in the day,  
And dull blue lay the far-off woods scarce seen  
Athwart the quivering atmosphere that burned  
The brittle stubble of broad harvest fields  
And rolled the banners of the tasseled corn  
And made an oven of the cracking soil.  
We fled to the cool margin of the Lake  
And the White City for a sennight's rest  
In that world's Dream of dreams—the home of  
Art.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

We stood on the beach at eve and watched  
the waves  
Come fawning o'er the sand to lick our feet,  
But all the while our thoughts went sailing on  
Across the waters till their dark green verge  
Bounded the blue of heaven. 'Twas Life's sea  
We traversed purple-flecked with shadows swift,  
Pale green with spots of sun, or white with crests,  
Till her far marge met the eternal blue,  
And we forgot the creeping waves. At morn  
Upon the Lake's calm bosom rippleless  
We rode, and saw afar the wonderland  
Whose softened splendors rose above the waves  
And hung beneath the waves—a double East  
Outrivaling the East—alas that flame  
Devoured her mighty pillared gate!—Spread out  
Before us lay Man's world, behind us Nature,  
And both our home. We entered the grand  
Court,



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

We saw, we heard,—no words can utter what,—  
We breathed in life and beauty with each breath,  
Nor asked of whence nor whither. A whole  
world

Had heaped her choicest treasures richly here  
Till the stunned senses ached with eager seeing !  
But whether resting in rose gardens cool,  
Or wandering mid palms and orchids rare,  
Or tasting luscious fruits from the Golden Gate,  
Or listening music by the broad lagoon  
Where the bold fountain triton-like arose,  
Or watching Spanish sailors tanned and brown  
Reel on the deck of Santa Maria,  
Or conning La Rabida's wonders old,  
Or loitering amid the dust and mould  
Of ancient sepulchers with skulls and bones,  
Archaic pottery and carved stones,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And curious bronzes with the dead entombed  
And after mouldering centuries exhumed,  
Or gazing on some giant masterpiece,  
Bust or sarcophagus, or statue scarred,  
Cathedral altar, or restored facade,  
Or bronze Augustus or Minerva helmed,  
Or wild Bacchante nude with streaming hair,  
Or lingering with mute wonder nigh to tears  
Before some canvas where the master's brush  
Made suffering immortal, or portrayed  
The universal heart-throbs of the race—  
All bound us closer, for two souls are knit  
By thought's community. Daily we learned  
In thousand linked experiences one truth,  
To give is blest and to receive is blest,  
But doubly blest is sharing!

Soul of Love,  
Thy name is sharing! One wild strawberry  
shared  
Is richer than a lap-full eaten lone,  
With no loved lips to grace the ruddy feast,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

And water quaffed from hands that dipped it up  
From gurgling wayside springs for love's sweet  
sake

Is cooler to parched lips than unshared ices  
Though pure Olympian nectar sparkled there !  
Aye when Self waxes Love must slowly wane,  
And where Love enters Self is quickly slain.

Love watcheth ever, and my sentinel eyes  
Would never lose thee though we wandered wide  
Adown the sculptured aisles of Italy  
Or in and out the booths of La belle France.  
I caught the shimmer of delighted eyes  
Across Carrara marbles that did seem  
Transparent breathing warm. I caught the gleam  
Of dark hair floating by green Latian bronzes.  
I saw thee pass the Flowery Kingdom's quaint  
And strange monotony of urn and vase.  
I watched thee glide among cold Russia's furs  
Or gaze on costumings of fabric rare  
From Britain's restless hundred-handed looms.  
I watched thee winding in and out where'er

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Thy eager fancy led in palaces  
Where art had wedded comfort and displayed  
Her nuptial gifts and gorgeous dowery,  
When once, half startled, thinking thyself lost,  
Thine eyes sought me. Lo! I was watching  
near,  
Not with cold spying eyes, but tender glad,  
As if their orbs had power to guide and guard.  
Then wert thou safe indeed! Though wandering  
far  
Thou couldst not drift beyond my faithful eyes!

At length grown weary with the endless maze,  
When night had lulled the city's mighty heart,  
We wandered down her quiet avenues,  
And here and there on porticoes and steps  
Sat seeming happy families—God knows,  
Who looks behind the scenes, what tragedies  
A quiet face can cover and what woes  
Unspeakable and sobbing threnodies  
A suffering heart can bury—but not one

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

In housed comfort knew so dear a home  
As we beneath those star-sown distant skies  
Unsheltered save by love. Thus hand in hand  
With interchanged confessions murmured low  
We reached a slender lodge. I kissed thy brow,  
I would have set a crown there, but gross gold  
Were far too cheap, and I was poor in gold.  
And so a long good-night, my crownless queen !

Thrice through the rifted clouds hath burst  
the sun  
Since then. Thrice have I crowned thee queen,  
and set  
A wreath invisible upon thy brow.  
Thrice have I greeted thee with silent lips  
And thrice alas have waited dreary months  
Heart-hungered for a touch of thy white hand,  
And saw but letters, or a faded rose,  
And heard thy voice in nightly dreams alone.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Four summers thus have bloomed since first  
we met,  
And yet our life is love's pure idyl still  
Whose dear simplicity and calm content  
Grow strong with years. No restless yearning  
drives  
Life's currents from their fixed and easy course  
Through fruitful valleys and broad meadowlands  
To mingle in the all engulfing sea !  
But once thy soul was burdened with strong grief.  
Thou couldst do naught but weep. A long  
despair,  
Not thine, filled all thy home with the shadow  
of death.  
Thou wert so crushed, so like a bruised reed  
Whose light crest sinks beneath the winds of  
fate,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

And yet my lips were dumb. What are poor words  
But rain-drops falling on a broken roof ?  
They make a dismal music in the soul,  
But the dull shadow sits and grins and leers.  
Grief is ne'er healed by words. I only wept.  
We wept together till the shadow fled.  
And then, so full of tender thankfulness,  
So self-reproaching that thy grief should mar  
Our few swift moments, thou didst kiss away  
My tears, though thine own lashes hung with  
    pearls,  
And thine own cheeks were wet that touched  
    my brow.

But for the rain bright Iris were not born ;  
But for wet lashes smiles were meaningless ;  
And they who never wept have never loved.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But when I blamed thee not but loved thee  
more  
For weeping with thee, smiles brake through  
the tears  
Like mellow sunrise on a night of storm,  
And in hope's radiant dawn we built anew  
Our world. We talked of home, the dearest word  
Of all the Saxon tongues,—the word whose charm  
Has kept inviolate love's precincts fair  
And builded deathless realms where men are men  
And nursed the heroes whose strong arms have  
won  
And guarded freedom!—Our own home should be  
A Saxon home with all its warmth of love,  
Secluded and sequestered from the world,  
But broad-hearthed, open-doored to faithful  
friends,  
And courteous to the stranger, a calm rest  
Amid the toil of life, where the tired soul



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Grows strong for each to-morrow, a retreat  
For baffled hearts to throb out their despair  
On love's warm bosom—a contented spot  
Whose simple furnishings, yet elegant,  
Wear not the life away with needless toil,  
Where art adorns but not usurps true use,  
Nor beauty yields to garish novelty  
At beldame Fashion's fickle nod and beck.  
“Our home shall be the setting of the gem,”  
I said; “nor richer than the stone itself,  
For diamonds are not set in massive gold.”  
“Nor thou and I the only gems,” thou saidst;  
“Cornelia's soul is mine! Give me her  
jewels!—

One full rich cluster,—Love's own coronet!—  
And what if they inherit little gold?  
Manhood and womanhood is wealth enough  
To live in honor. Toil can win the rest.  
Had our own mothers' hearts closed to so soon,  
Nor thou nor I had blessed them for our life.  
Thank God, thou wilt not now deny me this,  
Nor tyrant-like compel these hands to slay  
My unborn darlings!”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“ Mine own dream of home !  
May these things be ! Long years ago, when first  
The great hope dawned in my young manhood’s  
soul,

That childish lips should lisp me papa sweet,  
And creasy arms should clasp about my neck,  
And cheeks should nestle in my whiskered face  
For goodnight kisses, a great horror dawned  
Like freezing sun-dogs with the winter’s sun,  
Lest she, whom I had loved as man loves once  
And never loves again, might cheat my heart  
And leave our hearth a desert. When our lips  
Had trembled into vows, thy heart, I knew,  
Held in its loves my life’s fulfillment. Then,  
That horror climbed my lips ; but I spake not.  
How could I speak that dread, and love thee still ?

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

How dared I ask without impeaching thee  
The pledge that thine own hands should never  
    slay  
Our child? But others ! Ah, Thou art not such !  
I know thy soul ! But yet, one word from thee,—  
One little word,—to drive that shadow back.  
I crave assurance where my soul is sure.  
Thy pleading tells me all. And, Love, believe,  
I yearn to see thine eyes and lips and brow  
Reimaged in our children manifold.

“And thinkest thou that I love thine eyes less ?  
But motherhood asks not of eyes and brows,  
But presses the soft lips to her full breast  
Rejoiced in giving life. I will not cheat  
My heart of this one joy, nor question long  
If the lips be thine or mine, but only ours !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“ Sweet lips, and sweeter privilege to touch  
Its areoled fulness warm! Would that mine own  
Were worth to touch them! Shall our child’s  
indeed? ”

“ How could I cheat those lips of their true  
food ?

Lo, here ! God gave me these two sacred founts.  
He gave me womanhood. Then shame on her  
Who leaves to kine the task her God assigned.  
She is but half a mother and full cheeks  
And virgin bust bought with an empty heart  
Are costly beauties. Father of my child  
To be, my noble Lover, speak to me !  
Tell me that motherhood is more to thee  
Than virgin bloom ! Or, if thy lips are mute,  
Take what thine eyes are pleading and thy lips  
But now and oft ere now have chastely begged !  
Touch these white yoked lilies that still sleep !

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Thou wilt find speech !” Thou saidst, and drewst  
aside  
The drapery from thy bosom. My lips touched  
Its faultless argent. With thrice happy arms  
Then didst thou clasp me, and I heard thy heart  
Beat loud and fast. But neither spake nor stirred.  
At length I slept. When I awoke thy lips  
But pleaded ; “ Bless me !” and I answering  
spake :

“ Poor words are mine !” And then with rever-  
ent lips ;  
“ God keep thee ever pure as thou art now !  
God bless thy mind to ever nobler seeing !  
God bless thy heart to ever nobler feeling !  
God bless thy soul to ever nobler choosing !  
God lift thee into noblest womanhood !  
God crown thee with thrice blessed mother-  
hood !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

What makes thee tremble so ? Is it memory  
Of that last scene so weary months ago,  
But dear and vivid as but yesternight ?  
Why dost thou cling with such unwonted warmth  
Upon me, dewing neck and face with sighs  
That shake thy bosom ? Is it ecstasy,  
Or some new holy wish that struggles up  
To fill thine eyes with pleading ? Ay, they plead  
For love's sweet growth to perfect flower and  
fruit !

Then come, sweet Love, my bride and wife to be,  
For love halts not in chaste development,  
But mounts from grace to grace, from boon to  
boon,

Aspiring ever unto newer heights.  
Come thou, my Queen, fulfill thy plighted troth !  
I'll lead thee proudly to the altar, Love,  
And boldly claim thee mine before the world !  
Or, if more quiet nuptials please thee best,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

I'll take thee lightly from thy father's hand  
Beneath the mistletoe where first our lips  
Consented unto kisses and we loved !  
'This ring be symbol of the gracious bond  
'That makes us one, not by obedience,  
But by strong love ! Then may the burthened  
    years  
Be kind, and when life's winter falls at last,—  
As fall it must, with snow on our faint brows,—  
Like tired children croon us into sleep  
Together, sparing each one deathless grief !



## I LOVE THEE.



I love thee !  
But only the drooping lids that fell  
Over her beautiful eyes could tell  
The sweet unrest  
Of her maiden breast  
While mute on her lips the long farewell  
Hung tender and tremblingly.

I love thee !  
But only the seething waters heard  
In their starlit play the whispered word,  
For the harbor bar  
Lay faint and far  
Like a lessening cloud-bank huge and blurred  
On the far off edge of the sea.



I LOVE THEE.

I love thee!  
The pine-trees sighed in the autumn wind  
With a yearning sad and undefined,  
    And her rock retreat  
    At their mossy feet  
Dreamed nightly of one left far behind  
    O'er leagues of twilight sea.

I love thee !  
Her lips grew warm, and her eyes grew bright,  
Her soul grew strong in its new delight,  
    For winged words  
    Like messenger birds  
Came flitting across the trackless night  
    From over the restless sea.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I love thee !  
She came from over the surging main,  
A turtle-dove urged by love's sweet pain  
    To her distant mate  
    Left desolate  
Where the dusky woods at eve complain  
    Afar from the sounding sea.

I love thee !  
Not only the drooping lids that fell  
Over her beautiful eyes could tell  
    Love's perfect rest,  
    But lips were pressed  
That never again should say farewell  
    Till mute by Life's sad sea.



## “ MY OWN WEE WINSOME DEARIE.”



O Scotland's tongue so winning sweet,  
So lyric, blithe and cheery,  
I'd need thy matchless charms to greet  
My own wee winsome dearie !

My lassie is a winsome thing,  
A darling bonnie creature,  
With eyes that smile and lips that sing,  
Matchless in every feature.

My lassie, she is far away,  
And I with longing weary  
Still eager wait the distant day  
That takes me to my dearie !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

O winsome, wee, my bonnie lass,  
Thy ingle blazes cheery !  
O call me to thy side, my lass,  
To be for aye, my dearie !

I've stood with thee in Summer's sun,  
Neath Winter's skies all dreary,  
But all the seasons are as one  
When thou'rt my winsome dearie !

I've stood with thee in hours of mirth,  
When joy smiled on us fairly,  
I've wept with thee when "earth to earth"  
With grief oppressed thee sairly !

And so with earnest lips we twain  
Have plighted vows together —  
Ah why should Fate so kind remain,  
Yet rudely break love's tether

“MY OWN WEE WINSOME DEARIE.”

And set two mated souls adrift  
    Upon the world so dreary !  
And yet, I thank her for the gift ! —  
    Though parted, let's be cheery !

When I recall the parting smiles,  
    The eyes that brimmed so teary,  
I'd walk a hundred long Scotch miles  
    To call thee once my dearie !



## THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.



AS she turned the leaves of a volume old  
With Dante tracing the abysm of Hell  
Out of the folds of that book of gold  
A withered cluster of heart's-ease fell.

She started — and smiled through the gather-  
ing tears, —

Down fell at her feet the volume great,  
With the seven-fold woe the Bard uprears  
In his blighting vision of christian hate.

THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.

She smiled — for that rude disordered dream  
Which the listening ages miscalled divine,  
With its lurid dusk and its dusky gleam  
Dissolved and paled in her love's sunshine.

She wept — our deepest joys bring tears —  
As she thought of a vow and a maiden  
prayer  
Breathed long ago in the dead, dead years  
When she gathered the heart's-ease and  
pressed it there.

She tenderly laid them on her breast,  
And a tear fell soft on their withered leaves  
They brought her a vision, but not unblest ;  
She was dreaming of love and summer  
eves.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES,

In that warm sweet June so long ago,  
    With the lengthening shadows at set of sun,  
She stood once more on the old, old lawn,  
    And gathered the flowers one by one.

Under the light of the vesper stars  
    In the perfect silence of twilight hours,  
Under the sunset's purple bars  
    She breathed this vow to the listening  
    flowers :

“ No vaunting rider of gallant steeds,  
    No heartless lord of a foreign land,  
No holder of stocks and title-deeds,  
    Is the hero that wins my heart and hand ;



THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.

“But noble and free and broad of mind,  
    With a great heart beating for Truth and  
        Right  
And a voice to plead for humankind  
    In their restless struggling for freedom and  
        light.” .

She kissed the flowers and caressed their leaves  
    With a reverent touch of her pure white  
        hand  
And whispered as one who half believes  
    That the fair sweet creatures can under-  
        stand ;

“I will fold you away with my thoughts of him,  
    I will make you warders of love and faith,  
While I wait with a virgin troth to him  
    Though waiting and hoping end in death !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

As she turned the leaves of the volume old  
    With Dante threading the deeps of Hell,  
And out of the folds of that book of gold  
    The withered cluster of heart's-ease fell,  
She smiled — and wept — for the years that fled,  
    Had ended their ward in a trothal day,  
And she sent her "thoughts " with those flowers  
    dead  
    To her hero lover far away.  
"Take them," she murmured, "my own, my  
    Love,  
    I gathered them long ago for Thee :  
Though I knew Thee not, my own, my Love,  
    My heart was dreaming, — yes, *dreaming of*  
    *Thee.*"



## WHITHER AH WHITHER?



WHITHER, ah whither? I stand alone  
Facing the years that are to be!  
Ah me! Is there none,  
Not even one,  
Who will stand by my side and speak to me  
And lead the way through the desert lone?

Whither, ah whither? The way is dark  
Out through the years that are to be!  
Ah me! Is there none,  
Not even one,  
Whose presence shall be as a soul to me  
To make the desert a sunlit park?

Whither, ah whither? The end is far  
Out in the years that are to be!  
Ah me! Is there none,  
Not even one,  
Who will reach a strong pure hand to me  
To guide and guard like a faithful Lar?

## THY HEAVEN.



I F thoughts of me are a heaven to thee  
Too dear to leave for another  
With gates of pearl and a crystal sea—  
A reward for holy pother,  
  
I'll build thee a throne for thy royal own  
In the palace of my soul,  
And my heart shall be for a blood-red zone  
To girdle thy milk-white stole,

THY HEAVEN.

And the orbs of my eyes in warm surprise  
    Shall be jewels upon thy crown  
That beggar the miters in paradise  
    By the elders of God laid down,

And my breath shall be as a wind from the sea  
    That winnows the clouds away,  
And thy palace and thee shall the genii see  
    Deep-bathed in a fadeless day.

Ay ! my soul shall be a heaven to thee  
    Too dear to name with that other,  
That still with its pearls and crystal sea  
    Must be won by a holy pother !



## I WOULD THAT MY LIPS COULD UTTER.



I would that my lips could utter  
    A tithe of the exquisite pain  
That is throbbing and tingling within me  
    As I yearn for her presence again.

Ah the world would hear me weeping,  
    And mingle its tears with mine,  
And its heart would break at each teardrop,  
    And bleed with a pity divine.

But I cannot speak for grieving,  
    And a dumb prayer for relief  
From the endless burden of waiting  
    Is the only solace of grief.

For the heart cannot share its burdens,  
    But must bear them forever alone,  
And dumbly break like the pitcher  
    That falls on the well's curb-stone.

## THY BREASTS ARE TWIN WHITE LILIES.



THY breasts are twin white lilies  
That bloom immaculate !  
Thy lips are sister roses  
In blood-red virgin state !  
Thine eyes are linkèd stars  
In measureless blue deeps !  
Thy hair, a brooding night,  
Above the lilies sleeps !

I lie amid the lilies  
And rest as calm as death,  
And the roses kiss my brow  
With their attar laden breath,  
And the stars from out their azure  
Flood all my soul with light,  
And o'er my throbbing temples  
Falls a cataract of night.



## REST, REST THEE, SAD HEART!

(TO MISS F. H——, ON THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER).



REST, rest thee, sad heart  
That art throbbing in exquisite agony!  
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart  
That art crushed by pitiless destiny!  
O weep, but rest thee, sad heart,  
Or thou must break!

Rest, rest, wounded heart,  
In the valley of shadows dumb repining!  
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart  
Like Death on the ruins of Love reclining!  
O weep, and rest thee, sad heart,  
Or voiceless break!



REST, REST THEE, SAD HEART !

Rest, rest, troubled heart,  
For the clouds, though dark, have a silver  
lining !

Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,  
In the night of the valley the stars are  
still shining !  
O weep, but rest thee, sad heart,  
Or thou must break !

Rest, rest, lonely heart,  
Though the Spoiler has passed, there is  
love yet remaining !  
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,  
There are hearts that are yearning to  
still thy complaining !  
O weep, and rest thee, sad heart,  
Or coldly break !

Rest, rest thee, sad heart,  
O let not thy sensitive spirit deceive thee !  
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,  
O refuse not the love that our hearts  
ache to give thee !  
O weep ! Love rest thee, sad heart,  
Or ours will break !

## TO A RISING STAR.



BEAUTIFUL Star that shinest on me  
Out of thy East all gloriously  
Lift me out of myself to thee !

Thou art but a star, and less than me  
Who am greater than all things else that be  
On earth, or in heaven, or under the sea !

I know thou art dust and of little worth—  
A glittering waste, a lifeless dearth—  
As dull and dead as this bulky earth !

TO A RISING STAR.

I know thou risest, a beautiful slave  
Compelled and scourged from the Eastern wave  
Though hung with jewels from Ocean's cave !

While I am not dust, nor of little worth,  
God's breath informed me, and gave me birth,  
And made me master of heaven and earth !

Nor am I a slave of necessity,  
I am God's right hand for Eternity,  
I think and create and am greatly free !

Yet, beautiful Star, shine down on me  
Out of thy east, all gloriously,  
And lift me out of myself to thee !



## ESTRANGEMENT.



SHE looks a scorn that is far too fine  
To disfigure her lips with a sinister curve,  
And she hides her heart in its virgin shrine  
With an ostentation of woman's reserve.

She is hurt, she says, by my cold neglect,  
But vows, as she tosses back my ring,  
To prove that a woman's self-respect  
Can overlive so slight a thing.

Then her pride breaks down to a tender mood,  
In a flood of tears and a gust of sighs,  
And she says she is dying in widowhood,  
And will soon be at rest where her mother  
lies.

## ESTRANGEMENT.

I laugh at her tears and chide her heart,—  
    A brute, to laugh at a woman vexed !—  
And talk of travels and letters and art,  
    And the novel that Scribners publish next.

It is over now. She calls me too coarse  
    To sympathise with a woman's life.  
She is glad that her fates have done no worse,  
    But spared her the curse of being my wife.

We meet down town, but we never speak.  
    She floats in a martyr's atmosphere,  
And her spirit is all too fine to seek  
    A smile from the haughtiest cavalier.

Then she tosses her head in matronly pride  
    And walks with her richest Juno gait,  
To hint that the nuptial state denied  
    Was the blindest grossest blunder of fate.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

She prays that a curse to my life may cling,  
Or at least some blighting plague might  
take me,  
Though she once had vowed on her trothal ring  
Never in life or death to forsake me.

We loved,—or foolishly dreamed it was so,—  
In the flush and the blush of youth's heyday,  
But larger loves must the lesser outgrow,—  
Well! such tragedies happen every day!

But the saddest of tragedies comes before,  
When lips are touched and low words spoken  
That bind young hearts for the evermore  
Only to sever, crushed and broken.

But her heart is not broken, her wine is not draff,  
She will live to smile at each foolish sigh.  
And I—that resigned such a prize—I can laugh.  
We were simply mistaken then, Phillis and I.

## O'ER MY HEART IN ITS DREAMING.



O'ER my heart in its dreaming the swift tides  
of feeling

Like the flood-tides of ocean come surging  
and sweeping,

And their melody oft brings the balsam of heal-  
ing,

And their turbulence often the marah of  
weeping.

Floating wide on those mystical tides of emotion  
Old memories like tangles of sea-weed are  
drifting,

And hopes that like gallant ships breasted Life's  
ocean

Toss a wreck on the surge in its sinking  
and lifting.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Sweetest dreams float becalmed in the tropics  
of being

On a wide surgeless sea idly rolling and  
rocking,

Where rich islands of purple are dropped within  
seeing

By the mirage of phantasy luring and  
mocking.

Rude passions like storms o'er the wild waters  
dashing

Drive shoreward like driftwood the white  
craft of pleasures

And plunge on gray rocks with a horror of  
crashing

Rich argosies freighted with life-giving  
treasures.

But faith rides at anchor in havens of blessing,

Calmly rocking above her invisible moorings,

While loves that bore messages fraught with  
caressing

Like gay birds return from their airy de-  
tourings.



O'ER MY HEART IN ITS DREAMING.

Ah my heart, in thy dreaming, the swift tides  
of feeling

Like the flood-tides of ocean come surging  
and sweeping!

And their melody oft brings the balsam of heal-  
ing,

Though their turbulence often the marah  
of weeping!



## “LOVE AND WINE.”



MY Goethe sings of love and wine,  
My Lessing sings of wine and love,  
My muse is something more divine ;  
She bids my lips forego the wine  
For double draughts of nectared love.

Sing on, my Goethe, love, and wine,  
Sing on, my Lessing, wine and love,  
My lips refuse your Rhenish wine  
But claim the kisses doubly mine  
And doubled all the gifts of love.

## MY MUSE.



“THE god that touched my lips with song,  
That fed my soul with passions strong  
Is dead !

The Muse that comforted me long  
Is fled !

The radiant days of youth are spent !”  
I murmured full of discontent.

And then I looked into thine eyes,  
As clear and deep as southern skies  
Aglow !—

My Italy !—My Paradise !—  
And lo !

The radiant days I lately mourned,—  
The dream,—the Dæmon,—all returned !

## THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE<sup>\*</sup>



LIGHT of my life, my babe,  
With the laughter on thy lips,  
With thy restless dimpled feet,  
And thy rosy finger-tips.

Whence does the brightness come  
That glows in thy dusky eyes,  
As they welcome my home-coming glad  
With a look of sweet surprise,

<sup>\*</sup> Written by Mrs. Clara Harwood-Scholl.

THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE.

Or gaze with a startled wonder  
At the common things of earth,  
Not knowing that thy treasures  
Are all so little worth?

Yet wiser than thine elders  
Who treasure only gold,  
Thy little world is gladdened  
With riches manifold

Of toy and leaf and blossom  
To which a grateful heart  
Adds double worth and blessing  
That naught else can impart.

Wee image of thy father,  
Hast thou his soul within,  
A heart like his, still yearning  
From every source to win

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Its meed of truth and honor,  
    Its wealth of word and deed,  
To fashion for thy guidance  
    A broad and sunny creed,  
That shall leave the soul unfettered  
    To grow with each new thought  
That comes with Time's swift changes  
    Or by the heart is sought !  
Thou tiny elfin maiden,  
    Come nestle close and warm  
On the heart that loves thee best  
    Of all in this world of storm,  
Of sunshine, pain and gladness !  
    Oh may the garnered years  
Bring richest store of blessing  
    To banish all thy tears !



# A Handful of Sonnets.



## ALL IN ALL.

I need not fear to trust thee all in all,  
So pure, so gentle, and so nobly true,  
Thou child of solitudes ! Thy spirit drew  
Its richness from the silences that fall  
With calm and sweetness on the troubled heart  
Thou wert not nurst amid the glare of lamps  
A brilliant show, which the gay worldling  
stamps  
A social queen. Thine is the better part  
That naught can take away, true womanhood  
Whose effluence as the soft rays that fall  
From cloudless heavens and a night of stars,  
Silvering the dusk, makes all things fair and  
good :  
For this I learned to trust thee all in all,  
And faith the gate-way of all good unbars.



## GREETING.

WHERE shall I greet thee, Love ? In crowded  
ways

With throngs whose idle and incurious eyes  
Would startle into quick and cold surprise  
And quench sweet love with their rude heartless  
gaze ?

Nay, rather in some silence let us meet

Where the mute welcome of glad tears may be  
And lips may meet in love's sweet privacy  
Unshamed and pure ; in some lone loved retreat  
Where all chaste hopes unsilenced may be told  
And vows replighted speed the hours apace ;  
Where arms that waited long, at length may  
fold,

Thy yielding bosom in their warm embrace  
Nor heed the world's conventions false and cold  
While love's sweet breath is dewing neck and  
face.





## BETROTHAL.

MY pure one, my White Lily, whose chaste  
lips

Drank morning dew, where life's cool shadows  
brood !

My perfect flower of noble womanhood !  
From out thy wanton sisterhood, where dips  
With touch promiscuous the lustful bee  
Just prizing loveliness for what it yields  
When rifled of the treasure that it shields,  
I chose thee, spotless one, to cherish thee  
Less for ephemeral uses than to fill

Life with perennial sweetness. Love, place  
thou

With thy pure lips a seal upon my brow  
To keep my thoughts from straying into ill !  
Chasten my soul till life's realities  
Accord with thy soul's idealities !



## LINCOLN PARK, Storm.

### I

AGAIN the light spray dashing from the Lake,  
Wets all the level pavement by the beach  
And beats, wind-driven, in the face of each  
A gusty welcome to the merry-make  
Of wave and storm. Again the wash and swish  
With undertones of thunder and low moans  
That mock, like echo faint, old Ocean's tones  
When tumbling on his rocks with heathenish  
Wild mirth and daring, comes from the far deep,  
And silver wave-crests self-dissolving leap  
To clasp the errant winds in their mad chase,  
But slip back thwarted from the wet embrace  
With passion-quenched arms to liquid death  
Till quickened by the Storm-king's lusty breath.

II

This is the day, and these the sounds and sights  
That smote upon our senses, one sweet morn,  
With healing, for our eyes and hearts were  
worn,  
Art-dazzled by the myriad blinding lights  
Of the White City. We had sped away  
Behind the clattering hoofs of an ebon span  
That beat rude music as they lightly ran  
Along the pavement stones in arduous play.  
I hear it yet. The moan of breakers steals  
Mingled with hoof-beats and the roll of wheels  
Into my willing ear. Admiring cries  
Burst from thy lips, when the wild waters rise  
With sudden leap above the rock-curbed shore  
And plunge back head-long with unwonted roar.

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III

And fragments of forgotten verse, perforce,  
First sung by some old lover of the seas  
Utter themselves with song's impulsive ease  
From half unconscious lips, from their deep  
source

In labyrinthine memory compelled  
By the tumultuous beauty, and the wild  
Storm-tossed magnificence. Thine eyelids  
smiled,

And all thy being rose. Glad I beheld  
The light of thy sweet eyes, and glad I heard  
The music of thy voice, and drunk each word  
With eager spirit in. I hear thee still.  
Laugh still, sweet eyes, like two fair stars until  
Ye laugh again to mine ! Sing on, sweet lips,  
Till dearer Silence, Love's last song outstrips !



## SEPARATION.

DAY follows lingering day, on, on, forever,  
And I from out my study's cheerless prison  
Deep yearning, gaze into each day new risen  
And stretch my arms to thee, yet clasp thee  
never !

How long—how long—O weary, weary hours  
Must I this voiceless separation bear ?  
How long—how long, must I withstand  
despair

By memory's sweet but evanescent powers ?  
These lips, untouched by thine, grow strangely  
dumb,

These hands, unclasped by thine, their cunning  
lose,

This heart throbs weak, so severed from its  
mate.

Once more, Beloved, once more bid me come !  
I dare not come to thee if thou refuse,  
Yet O with what strong yearning do I wait !



## IN THE SHADOWS.

DEAR patient woman, with thy heart of gold,  
Strong burden-bearer through the lingering  
years,

Whom bootless grief doth often force to tears  
But ne'er to weak complainings, manifold

Rich graces wait upon thee ! Thou dost hold

Thyself insphered in household ways obscure,

An angel of mercy whom four walls iminure

To quiet ministerings, yet, behold !

To those four walls of pain, with beautiful feet

The Presence comes, and thou art grown more  
sweet

And tender and more strong. And larger thought

Comes with the visitation, and hath brought

The Vision Beautiful — the soul's ideal,

To woo thee into life's divinest real.



## BEYOND THE SHADOWS.

WE know not half the noble worth of life  
Till pallid lips, half-parted with the smile  
That Death emmarbled as he passed, the  
while

Send deathless greetings from beyond the strife !  
We know not half the worth of the warm blood  
That pulses in us, till those hearts are stilled  
Whose blameless love, and passionate yearning filled

Our veins to bursting with the joyous flood !  
Bereft, we stand, the flower of all Time,  
The conscious fruitage of ancestral worth !  
Her life, grown rich, tides on in thee sublime  
And though her dust be welcomed to the  
earth

Her spirit dwells in thee, my faithful One !  
I'll love and cherish both in thee alone !



## A GOLDEN DAY.

THRICE happy Love of mine, this Golden  
Day,  
Most precious in the heart's whole calendar,  
Has filled Life's cup brim full. The sacred  
jar  
Of wine with mint and honey mingled, nay  
The soul's own chalice, brimmed with nectar, lay  
Upon my purple lips — for naught did mar  
The bliss of that one draught, — and every  
scar  
Upon my soul was healed and fled away.  
Thrice happy Golden Day, on such as thou,  
'Twere happy to be born, 'twere blest to die,  
'Tis heaven to live, intense, intoxicate,  
The god within grown radiant on the brow,  
Thrilling the brain and beaming in the eye,—  
Best Love, blest Love, I thank thee for  
this date!





## TIME MARKS HER FLIGHT.

TIME marks her flight with roses and with  
snows.

Her Junes and her Decembers come and go  
In swift mutation, like the ebb and flow  
That daily breaks old Ocean's wide repose.  
To-day we wreath a garland of wild roses  
To crown at festival a maiden queen,  
To-morrow on her ample brow serene  
The gathered snow of four-score years reposes !  
We lisp till manhood's prime upon us steals,  
Then forge our mightiest aims on life's last  
verge.

Alas ! It were a thought too deep for tears,  
If Death, the Victor, brake the living seals  
Of soul, and all these aims that onward urge,  
Rest unfulfilled throughout the eternal  
years !



## MY BARD.

I would not have thee like to other bards,  
To sing aloof from me in far blue heights  
A mystic strain of iris-hued delights,  
Compelling souls to leap up heavenwards.  
I'd have thee lowlier, nearer to the swards  
That vault in buried loves, or kiss the feet  
Of joyous childhood, ere it runs to meet,  
Full-shod, Life's struggles and its stern rewards.  
I would not have thee like a mountain peak,  
Majestic, cold, oak-girdled, capped with  
snows.

Be thou my stately beech-wood, full of ease,  
A shelter from Life's heat, where I may seek  
The living brook that gurgles and o'erflows.  
There, 'mid the flowers, I'll drink and be  
at peace.

# THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY,

By J. W. SCHOLL,

Author of "SOCIAL TRAGEDIES."

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The movement of the poems is stirring, the diction clear and vigorous. The writer approaches the problems of life with a seriousness and an underlying reverence. — *Cumulation Book Index*.



Mr. Scholl is a man with poetic instincts, who has revolted from the dogmas of ancient creeds, and beat his way out into a faith more in accord with science and reason. — *Christian Register, Boston*.

All the poems have the same forceful rhetoric and vivid picturesqueness. — *Globe-Democrat, St. Louis.*



The title poem is well constructed and possesses power with many fine fancies. — *Transcript, Portland, Me.*



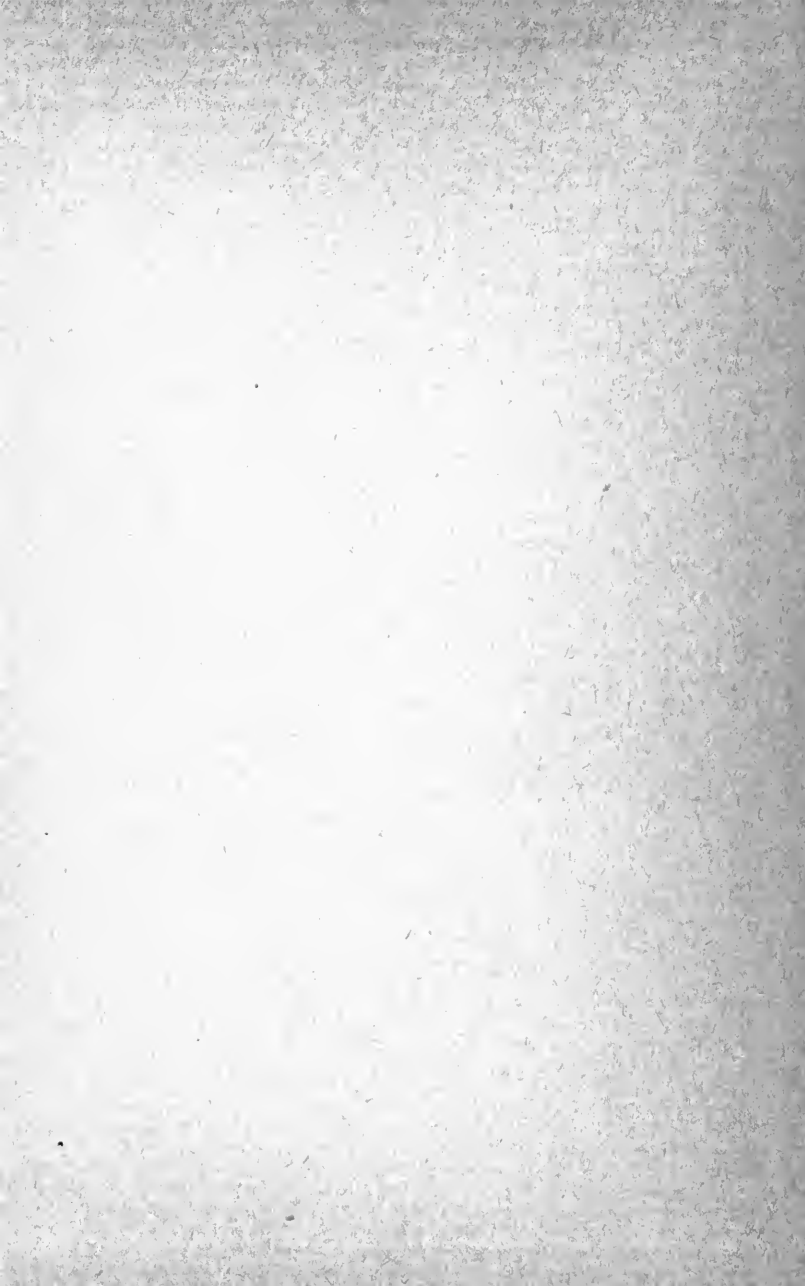
The author seems inspired with intense admiration for the late Col. Ingersoll. — *Spy, Worcester, Mass.*













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